

Leading a NextGen Meeting

Orange Conference 2013

Wednesday, April 24th, 2013

9:30-10:30 AM

No one likes meetings, right? However, the quickest way to get everyone on the same page is for everyone to meet regularly. In this breakout, you'll learn how all meetings are not created equal, and how to leverage time with your team to not just get on the same page, but to solve problems, grow as a team and move forward as an organization.

Introduction

Introductions from Kenny

I can't think of a better way to start a session on leading meetings than by showing this video:

[VIDEO] <http://www.hulu.com/watch/1495>

Talk about getting things done. Talk about energy. What if every meeting involved a gigantic turkey sub. In so many ways, this video is the antithesis of the kinds of meetings we're usually guilty of leading. This is the kind of meeting that people want to experience... kind of. **The common thread for most people is that people typically don't anticipate meetings.** No, they dread them. Hate may even be a better word. We've probably all agreed to the sentiment, "just think of the work I could get done if I didn't have all these meetings." This actually leads us to a very important point, but I feel like I need to begin again.

Introduction 2.0

[SLIDE] *Hello, my name is Kenny Conley and I've led really bad meetings.*

That felt good. Don't worry, I'm not going to make anyone else confess because I know that we've all had our moments of glory, and more than likely, we've all had far more moments we'd rather forget. We all know this is true because the overwhelming majority roll their eyes at the idea of meetings. They're essential and counter-productive at the same time.

[SLIDE] **Biggest meeting mistakes**

- Ask audience for common mistakes
- [SLIDE] Lack of preparation
 - [SLIDE] Unprepared facilitator

- [SLIDE] Unprepared participants
- [SLIDE] Not everyone engages
 - [SLIDE] Because the wrong people were in the room
 - [SLIDE] Because the wrong content is on the agenda
- [SLIDE] Lack of focus

Personal story

Over a year ago, I was in the middle of a very busy season in ministry, I was without a student pastor, so I was totally immersed in students while also giving oversight to our children's ministry as the NextGen Pastor. I have very capable children's pastors and I used that as an excuse to under-prioritize my meetings with them. I frequently cancelled the meetings (when I did, I considered it me doing a favor for them) and when I did meet with them, I approached it with "What do you need from me?" It was totally reactive based and passive.

This developed some pretty unhealthy habits for my team. We had some organizational conflict and other issues that came out of nowhere and I truly feel that part of this is my fault as I neglected the importance of meeting with my staff.

What helped the most was my new student pastor. A few months into being on staff he had a real moment of honesty. Being 10 years younger than me and brand new on the job, he weighed his words carefully and said, [SLIDE] "Dude, our meetings suck!" No, he was more gracious than that, but I'm so grateful that he brought it to my attention.

So, I don't need to convince you that meetings can be bad. If you had to place bets on meeting quality, odds are that you would double down on boring, irrelevant and total waste of time.

However, I'm convinced that this doesn't have to be the case.

Already so much has changed for my team.

- I came clean with the whole team, addressing the issue
- Accountability
- Weekly evaluation

Today we're going to focus on:

- What makes a meeting great
- Why and how NextGen teams should/could meet

Because you're here today, I'm going to make two assumptions:

- **Assumption 1:** You're a NextGen Leader or on a NextGen team
This is the first breakout as part of the NextGen Leader track. There are five essential breakouts that belong to this track that we felt would equip NextGen Leaders. So, I'm

going to assume that many of you in this room are NextGen Pastors/Directors or maybe you actually work on a NextGen team and you're here doing reconnaissance. That's great because if you lead a NextGen team, it is essential that you meet together, but leading a team that consists of both kids and student staff can be tricky. So, we're going to talk about what these kinds of meetings "could" look like. I'll share with you things my NextGen team meet about as well as some best practices from several other NextGen teams at leading churches around the country.

- **Assumption 2:** You lead meetings

Every one of you in this room lead meetings. Whether you are the NextGen Pastor or you work for a NextGen Pastor, you probably have staff or volunteers that you meet with on some kind of regular basis, or you should. There are some very important principles that meeting leaders must understand that have a huge impact on your ability to lead.

[SLIDE] Objective: Meetings = Incredible Leadership Potential

Change your attitude about meetings. It's leadership show time. Your NextGen meeting should be the most important event on your staff's calendar every week. If it isn't, that's your responsibility.

That may sound harsh, but think about it for a second. Its the one time a week that you have all your direct reports gathered around you for an hour or more. What happens in that meeting is fully in your control. This is your opportunity to lead out through your staff.

[SLIDE] Objective: Meetings = Leadership Opportunity Lost

NextGen Culture

Let's begin with the first item on the agenda. **Why do NextGen teams really need to meet together? Is it really essential?**

This is tricky. For decades now, Children's Ministry and Student Ministry have primarily existed separately. Usually these areas reported to the same person, but they typically didn't sit around the table, at least not in the context we're talking about today. This idea of NextGen and intergenerational ministry teams is totally new. From research that I've done, most NextGen/Family ministry directors were promoted out of student ministry or children's ministry, so it only makes sense that the division would continue to exist. On top of that, your senior leadership probably doesn't have any expectation for integrated leadership. Mine didn't, that's just what they got when they hired me.

What's challenging is that in so many churches, there isn't a healthy culture for this type of

meeting to exist, much less, thrive.

It's a collision of two very different cultures. Let's be honest, it's fanny pack meets goatee.

[SLIDE] It's like oil and water. It's Veggie Tales tie wearing children's pastor meets youth pastor "can you believe how hot my wife is?" It's primarily a male staff dominated role mixing with a predominantly female staff. Okay, I'll stop with the stereotypes.

Okay, maybe a few more...

I've have enough conversation with others to see similar trends. Children's Pastors and Student Pastors often tend to be at odds. It's not always open conflict, but maybe a passive aggressive tension. Children's Pastors tend to be very organized, great at planning and better than most at volunteer management. Student pastors tend to be experts at environments, excellent in relational ministry and know how to be relevant and fun. It's how these two group are wired that make them so good at what they do as well as what makes them so different.

Is it possible that our church might benefit by getting these two groups of people in the same room? Is it possible that the best thing that could happen to our children's ministry would be to have a student pastor spend some time in the environments and giving feedback and offering help? Could the same be true for our student ministries, to have a children's pastor with an eye for detail look over processes and procedures?

What about the things we have in common?

- We both need policies [SLIDE]
- We both lead volunteers [SLIDE]
- Students make some of the best volunteers in kidmin [SLIDE]
- We both serve the same families [SLIDE]
- We both lead the same kids [SLIDE]

We're more connected than we know or would like to admit.

Is it possible that there are enough of the same issues that both student and children's ministry leaders deal with that it is worth both student and children's leaders to sit in the same room on a regular basis?

We may initially resist the idea of bringing these two teams together because we're afraid that one team will tune out while the other team is engaged and vice versa. However, I wonder if the things where one team might tend to check out on are items that aren't nearly as important or strategic. **But the things that most of us would agree to being incredibly important:**

- Volunteer recruitment
- Volunteer retention
- Visitor experiences and retention
- Spiritual formation

- Discipleship
- Communication to volunteers and parents

The days of clear separation of student ministry and children's ministry is over. I hope you see this. Too much is at stake. Resources are limited and time is running out. If we can work together, our chances of success will be so much greater.

Five years ago I knew 3 NextGen/Family Ministry Pastors/Directors. Six months ago, I knew 30. Last week through the conference, that number grew to around 300.

[SLIDE] Objective: Meetings = Incredible Leadership Potential

Here's your opportunity to lead your team in the issues that matter most and allow your team to impact each other through their natural strengths.

Essentials to Highly Effective Meetings

If good meetings are rare, then leading meetings is harder than we give them credit to be. If by nature, more is at stake in the NextGen team meeting and we have more opportunities for disconnect, then it's essential that we become great at leading meetings. They must be top notch.

Two BIG Ideas

- **[SLIDE] Not all meetings are created equal**
 - Meeting genres as stated in Death by Meeting
 - Daily Check-Ins
 - Weekly Tacticals
 - Quarterly Strategic Offsites
 - Sometimes we cram things into meetings that may not belong
 - Staff development
 - Prayer/Ministry
 - Strategic stuff
 - Creative stuff
 - Tactical stuff
 - Create appropriate space
- **[SLIDE] Meetings are an essential tool on your leadership utility belt.**

Too often, meetings are random, unproductive and undisciplined. What if we changed the rules to our meetings? What if you started thinking outside of the box when it came to your meetings. Be ruthless!

[SLIDE] How to have a great meeting (exaggerated rules)

- **[SLIDE]** *Throw out the least necessary person at the table*
- **[SLIDE]** *Walk out of the meeting if it lasts more than 30 minutes*
- **[SLIDE]** *Do something productive today to make up for the time spent here*

These may be extreme, but if we leaned more in this direction, it's likely we'll lead better meetings.

The Origin of Bad Meetings

I get it though. Those of you who went to seminary never took the course "The Art of Leading Meetings." I'd be willing to bet that this class isn't even offered in business school. Most people think, what kind of training would be involved in leading a meeting. That seems below us. As a result, we continue to lead horribly awful meetings with occasional great ones. We learn only from what we've experienced. So, I'm going to take a few minutes to literally walk you through the essentials of great meetings.

[SLIDE] Before the Meeting

- **[SLIDE] Have a reason to meet**
If you don't have a clear purpose, don't meet
If you only have one item to meet about, it's okay for you meeting to be short.
- **[SLIDE] Invite Participants**
Invite the right people (what kind of meeting is it? who needs to be there?)
Ask for agenda suggestions
- **[SLIDE] Plan the meeting**
What decisions need to be made?
Create the Agenda
 - Short agendas are better than long agendas
 - You'll go long and frustrate people
 - Allow "white space" for creativity and engagement
 - Tackle the big stuff first
Pareto Principle
 - Biggest problem
 - Biggest opportunity
 - Grandest Goal
 - Greatest Issue
 - Assign timelines to each agenda item
 - Save the smallest items for the end to rush through

- **[SLIDE] Share information** - 24-48 hours before meeting begins
 - Provide detailed agenda
 - Give people opportunity to prepare
 - Encourage people to bring ideas to the meeting
- **[SLIDE] Pre-Sell big ideas**
No surprises in your meetings

[SLIDE] During the Meeting

Start the meeting on time, even if everyone hasn't arrived

- **[SLIDE] State agenda items and meeting objectives**
Objectives are not the same as an agenda. An agenda is what you're going to talk about. Objectives are what you want to accomplish or goals for the meeting.
- **[SLIDE] Begin the conversation**
People need to be invigorated by human interaction. Elevate the conversation to the highest level. Be intellectually provocative, challenge the participants to think. Encourage differing viewpoints, healthy debate and open dialogue.
This is the part that needs the most practice.
 - How do you ask the right questions?
 - How do you lead people into conflict?
 - How do you get people to discuss opposing viewpoints?

Decisive Book - Better decisions are made when more options are on the table. More options often mean opposing ideas.

- **[SLIDE] Never avoid conflict**
Better decisions are made and greater team buy-in happen as a result
- **[SLIDE] Have fun** - Relax a little.
Sharing laughter in a group increases good will, eases the difficult work of building consensus and making decisions.
- **[SLIDE] Press for decisions**
Keep the conversations on track. Always point the conversations back to the decision that needs to be made.
Create short-term incremental deadlines - if due in 6 months, won't start until 5
- **[SLIDE] Assign actions** - the most important part of the entire meeting.
Who is going to implement the decision that was made and by when will it be done?

- **[SLIDE] Take notes** - Document decisions, owners and deadlines
- **[SLIDE] Conclusion**
 - End on time with some exceptions. Learn how your team works and plan agendas accordingly so that you can finish meetings on time. This probably means shorter agendas. It may seem counter-intuitive, but do less, do it well and in the end, you'll get more done than crammed-full agendas where nothing really gets done anyway.
 - Review decisions, owners and deadlines

[SLIDE] After the Meeting

- **[SLIDE] Follow up**
Before the end of the day, send an email to everyone who was at the meeting with the notes from the meeting. What decisions were made, who is responsible and when is it due.
- **[SLIDE] Inspect progress**
Follow up later in the week with responsible parties. Don't waste meeting time to do this there, take care of this offline.

These are the components that make a great meeting. Many meetings have agendas, but that doesn't make them great meetings. Some have spirited conversations, but that alone doesn't make great meetings either. It's executing most of these items with precision that makes a great meeting.

Here's a helpful tip. Meetings really aren't for sharing information or updating the team. That can be done by email or offline conversations. Meetings are for wrestling through ideas, making decisions and directing how decisions are executed.

Leading these kinds of meetings takes a time commitment that most of us don't make. Some of us lead in our roles still clinging to the skillset that got us into this position. You're a ministry rockstar in whatever element. What we're discussing here means that its time help others shine by investing the time to lead well.

If you can do these things well, your team will feel like they're winning. They'll look forward to these meetings because this meeting is highly connected to success and accomplishment. Lastly, this is only going to happen if you lead well in this area.

[SLIDE] Objective: Meetings = Incredible Leadership Potential

How NextGen Meetings can look

Lets take a quick look at how some of these things are incorporated into a NextGen meeting.

Regardless of how your organization looks, you're organization is probably going to have lots of meetings. This is fine and normal. It's part of getting things done. Meetings probably include:

- [SLIDE] You meeting with direct reports (one on ones)
- [SLIDE] You meeting with all ministry directors
- [SLIDE] You meeting with all of NextGen staff
- [SLIDE] You with Children's Ministry for coordination (primarily for multi-site)
- [SLIDE] You with Student Ministry for coordination (primarily for multi-site)
- [SLIDE] Student ministry creative/curriculum meeting
- [SLIDE] Children's ministry curriculum/planning meeting
- [SLIDE] Strategic off-sites (planning, calendar, budget, vision/emphasis)
- [SLIDE] Meetings that ministry directors lead (their staff meetings)
- [SLIDE] Additional meetings as needed (special events or task forces)
- [SLIDE] Daily check-ins if you so desire

Depending on your staff size and whether you have one site or multiple sites, these are the essential meetings your organization probably needs to have. A small staff may be able to eliminate some of these meetings. Your all NextGen staff meeting may be the same as your meeting with ministry directors. Just recognize that even if you have a small staff, don't cram ministry specific items into your NextGen meeting just to eliminate another meeting as it wastes the time of others.

Meetings you lead:

[SLIDE] One on ones with direct reports

- Every other week or monthly
- Can be casual, but consider using an agenda that incorporates team goals, individual goals, area responsibilities, topics to discuss and items from above

[SLIDE] Meeting with ministry directors (NextGen)

- Critical tactical meeting, weekly or every other week
- Apply all I talked about in the last section to this meeting.

[SLIDE] Meeting with all of NextGen/Family Ministry

- No agenda
- Tell stories
- Celebrate wins
- Pray

- Vision
- 30 min every other week or monthly, important to keep the whole team connected

[SLIDE] Kids's Ministry and Student Ministry Coordination Meetings

- For small staffs, could be part of included in one on one
- Depending on your staff and structure, you may not need to lead this meeting
- Tackle ministry specific items that shouldn't be covered in NextGen tactical meeting

[SLIDE] Strategic Off-Sites

- Longer meetings to decide strategy, budget, calendar or share vision
- Best for ministry directors, perhaps once a year for all NextGen staff if about vision and direction
- 2-4 a year

Meetings you don't lead (but attend on rotation or by request):

[SLIDE] Student and Kids Curriculum/Creative meetings

- This meeting depends on staff size and structure
- Come for support and encouragement
- Let your staff lead, don't take control

[SLIDE] Ministry specific staff meetings

- This isn't your meeting...
- Attend on rotation or request

[SLIDE] Task Forces or Special Events

- Event planning or special projects (baptism, visitors, check-in)
- Usually a short term team
- Made up of individuals from various departments
- Findings are reported to NextGen directors meeting

Conclusion

[SLIDE] Objective: Meetings = Incredible Leadership Potential

Whether you have 2 people on your staff or 20, you have a lot of work to do. I don't have to tell you that, you already know.

Ministry has a way of eating our lunch. Regardless of how you plan for for ministry, you're always going to run out of time at the end of every day and the end of every week. You'll never get it all done.

I have one final question for you before we break:

Ministry is going to come at you every week. You'll have services every weekend, services every midweek. You'll have summer camp and mission trips. Kids will get saved and baptized. You'll have meetings, projects and deadlines and you can fill your schedule up without ever really being intentional. Ministry is going to just happen regardless of what you do. It's incredibly easy to be so busy, even see growth in numbers and look back at the end of a year and say, we did lots of ministry and good things happened, but nothing really changed. We're doing exactly what we've done for years. It's easy to look around and say, we're existing, but we're not really advancing?

Here's the question: When you look back at your ministry on a weekly or monthly basis, would you say you're existing or advancing?

Although budget and staff can help you advance, you can look around and find churches with less money and less staff doing more than you'd expect they could do.

Are you ready to take your leadership to the next level?

Leverage your meetings as a platform for leadership to advance your ministry.

Pray